

John Ashcroft — The Best Man For the Job

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The following are recent quotes on President-Elect Bush's nomination of Senator John Ashcroft for the office of U.S. Attorney General.

"I'm going to vote for him. ... (H)e was a legislator. His opinions at that time were the opinions of someone who writes the laws. He is now going to be an officer who enforces the laws. He will put his hand on the Bible, he will swear to uphold the law, that he will enforce the law. He has said so, and I take him at his word.

"I'm a legislator. I can have different opinions, but if I were thrust in the position of being attorney general and I took that oath, I could forget my opinions. God gave man a will. That's what Milton was writing about in 'Paradise Lost.' He has the will to put his opinions aside and to uphold his oath to enforce that law.

"This is not a time for filibuster. This is a time for us to work together. The president has nominated this man. He has had hearings. He's had an opportunity to explain his positions. He has (said) time and time again that his opinion was one thing when he enacted the laws but he is swearing an oath to enforce them now. There are two different things, two different offices. And I believe Ashcroft means what he says."

(West Virginia Democrat Senator Robert Byrd, Larry King Live, 1/18/01)

"A senator is nominated for high office. He's been reelected many times statewide. He has served admirably as his state's attorney general. He is devout, speaking openly and proudly about his religious faith. He emphasizes the critical role of religion in underpinning both morality and constitutional self-government. He speaks passionately about how his politics are shaped by his deeply held religious beliefs.

"Now: If his name is Lieberman and he is Jewish, his nomination evokes celebration. If his name is Ashcroft and he is Christian, his nomination evokes a hue and cry about 'divisiveness' and mobilizes a wall-to-wall liberal coalition to defeat him. (...)

"The ostensible issues are abortion and racial preferences, both of which Ashcroft fundamentally opposes. But are they really? In a country so divided on these issues, can one seriously argue that opposing abortion and racial preferences is proof of extremism? It would be odd indeed if the minority of Americans who believe in racial preferences and the minority who believe in abortion-on-demand were to define the American mainstream. In fact, under these issues lies a suspicion, even a prejudice, about the fitness of a truly religious conservative for high office. 'Christian Right' is a double negative in the liberal lexicon. It is meant to make decent

Americans cringe at the thought of some religious wing nut enforcing the laws. Torquemada at Agriculture perhaps. But not Justice, God forbid. (...)

"It was a great day when Joe Lieberman was nominated. And it was even greater that he publicly rooted his most deeply held political beliefs in his faith. It is rather ironic that we now need to go through that same process for Ashcroft's constituency of co-believers. When the Senate confirms him, we will have overcome yet another obstacle in America's steady march to religious toleration."

(Charles Krauthammer, The Washington Post, 1/19/01)

"An ugly subtext has ruled the day, every day, of the Senate confirmation hearings on Attorney General nominee John Ashcroft. ... Tellingly, they've resorted to distortions and untruths. And whenever possible, they've invoked race.

"Hence, Ted Kennedy's insinuation on Tuesday that Mr. Ashcroft's opposition as Missouri Governor to the funding scheme behind a controversial school desegregation plan — a plan, incidentally, that also was opposed by his Democratic predecessor for the same reasons — somehow constitutes racism. And hence, Joseph Biden's implication on Wednesday that granting an interview to a magazine is akin to advocating that publication's views in toto. This prompted an alert Republican Senator, Sam Brownback of Kansas, to remind Mr. Biden of Al Gore's Playboy interview.

"Even Mr. Ashcroft's deeply held religious beliefs were used as a mark against him. New York's Charles Schumer was relentless in questioning whether Mr. Ashcroft's religiously based pro-life positions would impede his ability to enforce Roe v. Wade. This is interesting. Last year, when Louis Farrakhan questioned whether the faith of an overtly pious Joe Lieberman would negatively affect his official duties as Vice President, Mr. Farrakhan was roundly, and properly, censured. Are Democrats the only ones allowed to hold strong religious beliefs? (...)

"Look for more of this racial theater; Senator Kennedy is hinting about a filibuster. But he needs 41 of 50 Democratic votes to sustain it, and there are still Democrats who can see the difference between Mr. Ashcroft's demeanor and Mr. Kennedy's. He and his friends have pulled out all the stops, but seem to be discovering that the Borking game no longer works. Indeed, they seem to be making fools of themselves."

(The Wall Street Journal, Editorial, 1/19/01)

"... Are the warhorse feminazis beating the shrubbery to rake up another pasteboard Anita Hill to ambush Bush's nominee for attorney general, John Ashcroft? If so, stay tuned for a replay of the poisonous psychodrama where race is used as a cynical cover for the real liberal monomania, abortion — as if the entire universe revolves around a single issue affecting the private conduct and personal convenience of heterosexual Western women.

"As a pro-choice member of Planned Parenthood, I detest the way the abortion-rights crusade has crippled the women's movement and distorted American politics because of the fanaticism of feminist leaders who are unembarrassed agents of the Democratic party. ..."

(Camille Paglia, salon.com, 1/17/01)

Staff Contact: Lauren DeBellis - 4-2429